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ABSTRACT

This report describes the implementation of House Bill 246 (HB 246) passed by the 67th Texas Legislature as part of the response to education reform legislation. The State Board of Eduction is required to report on the status of the curriculum in the public schools 30 days prior to each legislative session. The report covers activities on the part of the state regarding curriculum issues from December 1986 to December 1988. Included is an overview of the current status of the curriculum for both general and vocational education. The status of general education is reviewed in the areas of requirement changes, textbook adoption, student assessment, teacher preparation, and curriculum materials development. In vocational education, reviewed areas are: Master Plan adoption, curriculum changes, textbook adoption, teacher preparation, and curriculum materials development. Appended is Section 21.101 (Required Curriculum) of the Texas Education Code. (SI)

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ED304794

# THE STATUS OF THE CURRICULUM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# FROM THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
AUSTIN, TEXAS

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JANUARY 1989

# The Status of the Curriculum In the Public Schools

## As Reported By the State Board of Education

## Submitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, And the Seventy-First Texas Legislature

**1987-1988**

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**Texas Education Agency**
**1701 North Congress Avenue**
**Austin, Texas 78701**

December 1988

To the Honorable Governor of Texas, Lieutenant Governor, and Seventy-First Legislature:

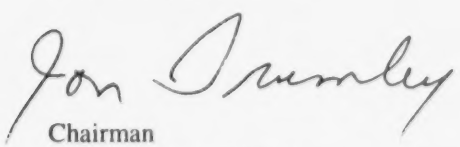
The State Board of Education is pleased to provide this latest report on the implementation of House Bill 246 passed by the 67th Texas Legislature. Previous reports have described school districts' partial implementation of the new state curriculum, 1984-85, and full implementation, 1985-86. This *Status of the Curriculum in the Public Schools* covers activities on the part of the state regarding curriculum issues from December 1986 to December 1988. Included is an overview of the current status of the curriculum for both general education and vocational education.

This report is based on the systematic review of the state's curriculum which is an ongoing process. The State Board of Education developed the process of curriculum review as part of the response to education reform legislation that began with passage of HB 246. The bill, which is now implemented by State Board rules in Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code, mandated a well-balanced curriculum. It also called for the identification of essential elements of instruction for all subjects and courses of the curriculum. In Spring 1984, the State Board adopted the essential elements that comprise the state's first core curriculum. Districts were required to implement the elements the following year.

In January 1987, the State Board adopted the Master Plan for Vocational Education. The Plan emphasizes the importance of a strong academic foundation for all students. In addition, it calls for schools to provide students with an awareness of a broad range of career opportunities and to offer an occupationally relevant education appropriate for the Texas economy of the 21st century. To assist with the implementation of the Master Plan, the Board has adopted new vocational education essential elements.

*The Status of the Curriculum in the Public Schools* is submitted in response to the HB 246 mandate that the State Board report 30 days prior to each legislative session on the status of the curriculum in the public schools.

Respectfully submitted,



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# Historical Background

During the past two years, the State Board of Education and the Central Education Agency have continued to review and refine the state basic curriculum and to assist in its implementation in Texas schools. The implementation of the state curriculum, which began in 1984-85, marked a major turning point for the public schools of Texas. The curriculum, comprised of essential elements and subelements of instruction for the required subjects and courses, was mandated by House Bill 246 of the 67th Texas Legislature in 1981. The purpose of the legislation was to improve student achievement by extensively upgrading the curriculum.

The passage of HB 246 reflected widespread concern about education in the state. Curriculum inadequacies were reflected in poor student achievement on such test measurements as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills, now called the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). The former curriculum had become overcrowded with a variety of topics, leaving confusion and uncertainty about what was of critical importance for teachers to teach and for students to learn. Subjects, courses, and students' time-on-task varied considerably from district to district, campus to campus, and classroom to classroom. Educators and others feared that wide variations in the curriculum, given the highly mobile Texas population, limited student access to a basic and consistent curriculum.

These concerns had caused the 66th Legislature to direct the State Board of Education to undertake a curriculum study in 1979. The State Board recommended to the 67th Legislature that all schools should be required to offer a well-balanced curriculum and that the most essential parts of each subject be designated. A Governor's Advisory Committee on Education supported the Board's recommendation. The passage of HB 246 was the legislative result of these actions.

Today, provisions of HB 246 begin with Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code. (See Appendix.) The State Board rules for implementing the law are contained in Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code.

The responsibility for providing a well-balanced curriculum designed to meet individual student needs rests with the school districts of the state. School districts are encouraged to exceed minimum requirements of the law.

The essential elements are defined as representing those core areas of knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that must be included in instruction and that each student must be provided an opportunity to learn to be an effective and productive member of society. Districts are urged to expand and add to the essential elements, but they may not delete any.

To implement the mandate to develop essential elements, the State Board of Education involved a broad range of Texas educators, policymakers, and the public in a series of curriculum study groups that met in various regions throughout the state. The groups proposed essential elements for each of the subject areas specified in HB 246. In addition, they recommended subelements to give more specificity to the essential elements. The recommendations were reviewed by advisory groups and discussed in a series of public meetings. In 1984, the Board approved the essential elements now given in Chapter 75.

To provide for an ongoing evaluation of the essential elements and other provisions of Chapter 75, the State Board adopted a rule (Section 75.5) calling for five-year reviews beginning in 1990-91. Based upon

the results of the five-year assessments, the State Board will modify its rules as appropriate. To prepare for the first full-scale modification of the new rules in 1990, the Agency since 1986 has conducted an annual curriculum review by educators in the field. Results of each year's curriculum review are reported to the Board. The first year, educators representing general education subjects and courses conducted the review in zone meetings across the state. In 1987 and again in 1988, vocational education personnel joined in the review. Educators from programs serving special populations, including gifted/talented, bilingual, and special education, also participate in the annual reviews.

Many of the same teachers and administrators have been active in the review process since its inception in 1986. Each year the input from these individuals reflects the thinking of an extensive range of professional educators, a perspective that represents a valuable collaboration of expertise.

# Ongoing Alignment of the Education System With the State Curriculum

For the past several years, Texas has made a major commitment to ensure the success of the education reform legislation of the 1980s. In January 1987, the State Board of Education adopted a Long-Range Plan for Public School Education designed to improve significantly the quality of student learning. Built around eight major goals, the Plan places major emphasis on students' developing essential academic skills and acquiring a knowledge base on which to build lifelong learning.

Reflecting House Bill 246, Goal Two calls for schools to teach a well-balanced curriculum so that all students may realize their learning potential and prepare for productive lives. As one result of the Goal, vocational education courses have been revised to focus on strong academic foundations and broad occupational skills. Additional effort is also being given to special services for compensatory, bilingual, migrant, handicapped, and gifted and talented students.

The state curriculum, which includes both general education and vocational education, is being continually reviewed for correlation to the Long-Range Plan, legal mandates, and other requirements. In concert with this action, efforts are ongoing to align all components of the educational process with the state curriculum.

## General Education

### Changes in Requirements in Subject Areas

As a result of the continuing review of the curriculum, in Summer 1988 the State Board of Education modified several requirements. The Board deleted the requirement that English IV (Academic) be two separate semester courses and combined the essential elements into one course for which schools may award one unit of credit. Board members also took action to allow students in Grades 7 and/or 8 to take high school courses and be awarded high school credit. They also approved College Board advanced placement courses to meet graduation requirements, awarding these courses automatic status as honors courses.

For the past two years, participants of the curriculum review process have considered curriculum implications for gifted and talented students as legislation has mandated programs for these students. The 70th Legislature required each district to adopt a process for identifying gifted and talented students by the 1990-91 school year and to establish a program for those students in all grade levels. Also, reviewers have considered curriculum implications for students who are at risk of dropping out of school. In response to legislative mandate (House Bill 1010 of the 70th session), the Agency is developing a dropout reduction program that aims to reduce the Texas dropout rate to no more than 5 percent of the total student population.

### The Textbook Adoption Process

In response to House Bill 72 of the 68th Legislature, the State Board of Education has been implementing the six-year textbook adoption cycle to provide textbooks that contain content to teach the essential elements listed in Chapter 75. Textbooks will not fully reflect all Texas essential elements until 1990.

The Board has also responded to the legislative mandate that permits it to select a maximum of eight, instead of the previous five, textbooks in each subject area. The mandate also requires the Board to choose, if available, one remedial and one advanced text on the multiple list in each subject area; it expands the

definition of textbook to include magnetic media and computer software, provided they can be delivered in lieu of textbooks with similar costs to the state.

In accordance with a new State Board rule, when possible revisions in the essential elements are being made in sequence with the textbook adoption cycle. Districts will be required to implement the new changes no later than the date on which the textbooks are available in the districts.

### Student Assessment

Since statewide assessment of students began in 1979, the Central Education Agency has adopted and administered appropriate criterion-referenced tests. The tests measure minimum basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics at designated grade levels. Students take the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), formerly TABS, in Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and at the exit level.

For the past two years, TEAMS tests in Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 have indicated improved student performance from previous years' testing. For example, improvements show that nearly three-fourths of students in Grades 3, 5, and 7 mastered the reading, writing, and mathematics tests in 1988 compared to just more than half in 1986. Ninth grade scores in mathematics, reading, and writing also showed improvement from 1985-86 to 1987-88. The 1988 exit-level scores were up over 1987, the first year the state required Texas seniors to pass a basic skills exam in mathematics and English language arts to receive the high school diploma. In addition to overall improvement in student performance, the tests indicate that the achievement gap between minority and other students has noticeably narrowed.

However, many educators over the state are concerned that TEAMS objectives might become the focus of teaching in schools. They fear that the minimum competencies tested by the exams might instead become maximums taught to all students. When TEAMS results became a major emphasis of the state's performance-based accreditation process, some teachers reportedly came under considerable pressure to raise test scores. "Teaching to the test" has become a common criticism.

The State Board of Education recognized the possible problems when it adopted its Long-Range Plan a year ago. The Plan states that minimum skills testing "is not a wholly adequate measure of learning."

To help alleviate concerns and to make the tests as meaningful as possible, the State Board has taken several steps to modify the TEAMS program beginning in the 1990-91 school year. First, the scope of the tests will be broadened to cover more of the essential elements. This change is designed to ensure that instruction focuses on the essential elements rather than on a narrow set of test objectives. The second major change in the TEAMS program will switch the testing dates from February to early October. This change answers concerns that some schools devote an inordinate amount of time to TEAMS preparation during the school year and that teachers and principals are under too much pressure about being evaluated based on student performance on TEAMS. Also, early fall testing will perhaps remove the pressure to teach first grade skills prematurely and will allow the Grade 1 test to be restructured as a readiness instrument. Another change will be the addition of a written composition on the exit-level test beginning in the 1990-91 school year.

### Ongoing Teacher Preparation in the Essential Elements

The State Board of Education has adopted a broad range of tests for the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET). The tests cover both subject area and administrator certificates. The ExCET subject area tests are built around the essential elements required by Chapter 75. They are designed to ensure that teachers have proper knowledge of teaching skills and their subject areas before receiving their certificates. A total of 63 subject area and professional development tests are available to graduates

of the Texas teacher education institutions, graduates of alternative certification programs in the state, and out-of-state teachers.

In Spring 1989, the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) will replace the Pre-Professional Skills Test (P-PST) as an entrance examination for students seeking admittance to teacher education programs. The testing program, which was mandated by the 70th Legislature, will assume even greater significance beginning in Fall 1989. At that time, all freshmen entering Texas colleges and universities will be required to take the basic skills exam. The testing program and the results will have an impact on the curriculum and instruction in Texas public schools. The law requires that the results of the testing be reported to the high school from which a student was graduated. Developers of TASP, mandated by the 70th Legislature, were the Central Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### Development of Curriculum Materials

To help school districts implement the state curriculum, the Division of General Education of the Central Education Agency is providing state curriculum frameworks that reflect legal mandates and State Board of Education rules and give suggestions for their implementation. Staff has designed the frameworks to assist curriculum planners, teachers, and administrators in developing their own locally appropriate curriculum guides.

State frameworks in the curriculum areas of social studies, mathematics, science, English language arts, music, art, theatre arts, other languages, physical education, business education, and health education have been disseminated to school districts or are in the process of being developed.

Another series of documents is entitled REACH (Real Education Achievement Can Happen). The series provides support to districts to increase student achievement and gives suggestions on applying research to the classroom. The first publications in the series complement technical assistance support provided by the Agency to low-achieving campuses. The goal, a top priority of the State Board, is to help each and every student succeed in school. Two other publications in the series focus on higher level thinking skills. The thrust to teach higher level thinking skills is, in part, a response to the concern that Texas schools may be influenced to teach only the minimum skills tested by TEAMS.

The Agency has also developed information packets to promote the understanding of dyslexia and to help schools meet requirements for dyslexic students mandated by legislation.

A series of publications to promote students' self-responsibility is related to issues of school-age pregnancy (to help reduce school drop outs), drug education and prevention, and prevention of AIDS and other communicable diseases, all concerns expressed by legislators. The publications reflect critical thrusts in education, but all support the importance of the essential elements as the fundamental basis of the curriculum.

## Vocational Education

### Master Plan for Vocational Education

In January 1987, the State Board adopted Career Opportunities in Texas: A Master Plan for Vocational Education. The Master Plan, mandated by House Bill 72, has been the blueprint for restructuring vocational education in Texas.

The Master Plan reflects the State Board's Mission for Public Education which is included in the Board's Long-Range Plan. The Mission statement calls for all students to receive an education that will enable

them to live and work in a changing future. To assist in fulfilling the Mission, the Master Plan for Vocational Education emphasizes the need for strong academic foundations for all students, awareness of a broad range of career opportunities, and an occupationally relevant education appropriate for the Texas economy of the 21st century.

### Implementation Plans and Strategies

The Master Plan timeframe established September 1988 as the target date for implementing the initial changes in vocational education in the classroom. Some changes will occur on a phased-in basis with full implementation scheduled for September 1989.

Immediately after adoption of the Master Plan in January 1987, advisory committees composed of business and industry representatives and educators were appointed for all vocational program areas. The committees had the responsibility of reviewing existing courses, recommending discontinuation of those courses that were no longer appropriate, revising courses as necessary, and developing new courses to address the changing technologies of business and industry. In February 1987, State Board curriculum review committees analyzed proposed new and revised courses and essential elements.

January 1987 was also the starting point of a series of other implementation activities. Staff in the Division of Vocational Education began conducting workshops and conferences to familiarize local school board members, administrators, counselors, and teachers with the process of restructuring vocational education in Texas. Staff members initiated plans to develop new vocational education curriculum guides and student instructional materials. They also developed plans to provide teacher inservice training relating to the new courses and curriculum.

### Vocational Education Curriculum Changes

In January 1988, the State Board, acting on the recommendations of the curriculum review committees, adopted new and revised courses and essential elements for vocational education. Significant changes in the vocational education curriculum included:

- development of a new course entitled Life Management Skills that schools will be required to offer in Grades 7 and 8 beginning in September 1989
- consolidation of an existing vocational education course, Occupational Investigation, and an existing business education course, Career Exploration, to form a new Grade 7 and 8 course entitled Career Investigation
- restructuring of the traditional Production Agriculture, Home Economics, and Industrial Arts programs in Grades 9-12 to provide students with both comprehensive courses and a series of semester-length technical courses in each program
- development of new cluster courses to provide instruction in groups of related occupations for students in Grades 10-12
- revision of occupationally specific courses for students in Grades 11-12 based on labor market demands and the latest technologies

### Textbook Adoption Process

Since all vocational education courses were undergoing revision, vocational education courses were removed from Textbook Proclamation 64 which was issued by the State Board in March 1987. After the adoption of the new vocational programs, courses were again placed on the six-year textbook cycle with the first

books scheduled for use in the classroom in September 1990. By 1996, textbooks reflecting the new essential elements will be in classrooms.

### Teacher Preparation in the Essential Elements

Regional and state inservice workshops designed to prepare vocational teachers to teach the new courses and essential elements were conducted in the spring and summer of 1987. These activities were continued in subsequent workshops conducted during the 1987-88 fiscal year.

### Development of Curriculum Materials

Federal vocational education funds support development of curriculum development activities. Curriculum guides are developed at vocational education curriculum centers at Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at Austin, and East Texas State University. The centers develop the guides through contractual arrangements with the Texas Education Agency.

To date, curriculum guides and student learning activity packets have been developed in 43 of the new and revised vocational education courses in the program areas of vocational home economics, agricultural science and technology, trade and industrial education, marketing education, health occupations, industrial technology education, career investigation, and office education. These guides were disseminated during August and September 1988 and are being used throughout the state.

In July 1987, work began on the development of 34 additional vocational education curriculum guides and accompanying student instructional materials. These guides will be available for the 1989-90 school year.

# Review of the State Curriculum

The review of the curriculum is an ongoing process. HB 246 of the 67th Texas Legislature included the requirement that the State Board report 30 days prior to each legislative session on the status of the curriculum in the public schools. The rules of the State Board of Education (Section 75.5) specify that during the school year 1990-1991 and every five years thereafter, the State Board will review and evaluate the appropriateness of the essential elements and other provisions of Chapter 75.

The Agency since 1986 has conducted an annual curriculum review by educators in the field. The first year, educators representing general education subjects and courses conducted the review in four zone meetings and a state meeting. Participants included superintendents, principals, curriculum supervisors, teachers, college/university educators, and professional organization personnel who participated in meetings of the original curriculum study groups in 1981-83.

In 1987 and again in 1988, both general education and vocational education personnel were represented in the zone meetings and the state meeting. Additional participants representing general education were invited to replace the original curriculum review members who moved, left the profession, or otherwise were no longer available to participate. Educators from programs serving special populations, including gifted/talented and special education, were also invited to participate in the review process. Approximately 800 educators participated in the 1988 review of curriculum.

From the comments and reports submitted by each of the subject area groups, strengths and areas of concern along with recommendations were compiled for review by the State Board of Education. In addition to strengths reported in an earlier status report, the following strengths were mentioned by the educators who participated in the 1987 and 1988 curriculum reviews:

- A common curriculum allows students in special programs to enter the mainstream with less difficulty than formerly.
- Content and skills of vocational education courses are related to successful employment.
- Recently adopted textbooks clearly support the essential elements.
- In the main, the essential elements are comprehensive, practical, and attainable.
- The essential elements provide statewide continuity for the instruction of special student populations.

Concerns about the curriculum expressed by educators in the curriculum review process, in addition to those concerns reported in an earlier status report, relate to five basic areas: issues relating to content and implementation, assessment, instructional arrangements and materials, teachers and teaching, appropriate placement of students.

As the curriculum review process continues and educators representative of all areas of curriculum monitor the implementation of the essential elements and other rules related to curriculum, the State Board will adjust Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code accordingly or submit recommendations to the Legislature.

## Appendix

# TEXAS EDUCATION CODE

§21.101. **Required Curriculum**

(a) Each school district that offers prekindergarten through grade 12 shall offer a well-balanced curriculum that includes:

( 1) English language arts;
( 2) other languages, to the extent possible;
( 3) mathematics;
( 4) science;
( 5) health;
( 6) physical education;
( 7) fine arts;
( 8) social studies;
( 9) economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits;
(10) business education;
(11) vocational education; and
(12) Texas and United States history as individual subjects and in reading courses.

(b) The State Board of Education by rule shall designate subjects comprising a well-balanced curriculum to be offered by a school district that does not offer prekindergarten through grade 12.

(c) The State Board of Education by rule shall designate the essential elements of each subject listed in Subsection (a) of this section and shall require each district to provide instruction in those elements at appropriate grade levels. In order to be accredited, a district must provide instruction in those essential elements as specified by the state board.

(d) Local instructional plans may draw upon state curriculum frameworks and program standards as appropriate. The responsibility for enabling all children to participate actively in a balanced curriculum which is designed to meet individual needs rests with the local school district. Districts are encouraged to exceed minimum requirements of the law. A primary purpose of the public school curriculum in Texas shall be to prepare thoughtful, active citizens who understand the importance of patriotism and can function productively in a free enterprise society with appreciation for the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage.

(e) The State Board of Education shall provide for optional subjects in addition to those provided by Subsection (a) of this section as appropriate for districts that require choices in order to address unique local needs. In addition, the commissioner of education may permit a school district to vary from the required curriculum as necessary to avoid hardship to the district.

(f) Not later than the 30th day preceding the day on which each regular session of the legislature convenes, the State Board of Education shall transmit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the legislature a report on the status of curriculum in the public schools. The report shall include recommendations for legislative changes necessary to improve, modify, or add to the curriculum.

(g) The State Board of Education and local school districts shall foster the continuation of the tradition of teaching American and Texas history and the free enterprise system in regular subject matter and in reading courses in the public free schools of Texas and in the adoption of textbooks.

[Acts 1969, 61st Leg., p. 2919, ch. 889, §1, eff. Sept. 1, 1969. Amended by Acts 1981, 67th Leg., p. 727, ch. 274, §1, eff. Aug. 31, 1981; Acts 1984, 68th Leg., 2nd C.S., p. 396, ch. 28, art. IV, part B, §2, eff. June 1, 1985.]

Section 3 of the 1981 amendatory act provides:

"The State Board of Education shall implement the requirements of Section 21.101, Texas Education Code, as amended by this Act, in a timely and appropriate manner. To the extent possible, the board shall begin implementation for the 1981-1982 school year. The board may require compliance with the requirements of laws repealed by this Act [§§21.102 to 21.108 and 21.112 and 21.12], not including Sections 4.15 and 4.16, Texas Education Code, until the board fully implements Section 21.101."

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

### TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

### TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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